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H.B. No. 5527 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING A DOMESTIC WORKERS BILL OF RIGHTS.

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I submit testimony in support of H.B 5527 Connecticut Domestic Bill of Rights. This bill protects the rights of all individuals, including those more vulnerable, specifically immigrants and women of color. This evaluates their needs and set of standards to the industry, as well as employment laws. In terms of human trafficking in Connecticut, according to the U.S. Department of State, Trafficking in Persons Report, June 2013, 183 calls were received from Connecticut of which 27 were identified as potential trafficking: 6 labor trafficking, 20 sex trafficking and 1 considered other trafficking. These potential trafficking cases came from the cities of: Bridgeport, Bristol, Hartford, Meriden, Middletown, Naugatuck, New Canaan, Salem, Stamford, and West Haven.

According to Permanent Commission on the status of women (2014), "In Connecticut from 2008 to 2010, the Office of Victim Services identified 18 adult survivors, via a housing contract with the Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence; the State Department of Children and Families identified 120 child survivors, and the non-governmental organizations, the Paul and Lisa Program and the International Institute of Connecticut, Inc., identified 109 survivors."

Successful models implemented of the Workers Bill of Rights come from Massachusetts and California state where, "When a worker is required to be on duty for a period of 24 consecutive hours or more, the employer and the domestic worker may agree in writing prior to performance of the work to exclude a regularly scheduled sleeping period of not more than 8

hours from working time for each 24-hour period, provided that the employer provides adequate sleeping quarters and the domestic worker can enjoy 8 hours of uninterrupted sleep. If the sleeping period is interrupted by a call to duty, the entire period must be counted as working time. If no prior written agreement is made all meal periods, rest periods and sleeping periods shall constitute working time.” Permanent Commission on the status of Women. (2014).

Some recommendations provided by the TIP council for H.B. No. 5527 are: to Support a State Domestic Bill of Rights and eliminate the requirement that there be force, fraud, or coercion for sex trafficking of minors (the fact that they are minors should be enough. TIP committee notes (2013).

Currently, “domestic workers are excluded from minimum wage and overtime protections in about half of states across the country³ and from nearly all state anti-discrimination and other civil rights laws and labor relations laws.” Winning Dignity and Respect: A Guide to the Domestic Workers bill of rights. (2013).

According to The National Employment Law Project and the National Domestic Workers Alliance (2013). When raising this bill, additional areas of importance which should be noted are:

1. Annual Paid Leave Time
2. One Day of Rest in Calendar Week
3. Provision of Food and Housing
4. Sleep Time and Compensation for Interrupted Sleep Time
5. Paid Meal and Rest Breaks

6. Notice of Termination and Severance Pay

7. Written Notice and Wage Statements

8. Recordkeeping by Employers

Domestic Worker bill of rights is a social justice issue that needs to be supported. Too many people fall in the trap of being taken advantage of because of financial desperation and hardship, fear from an employer or lack of opportunity. This bill would give these workers a voice, defining the abuse they are facing and the right to earn overtime and minimum wage of Connecticut. We are speaking about equality, which is considered a human right. This bill needs to be passed on behalf of all workers trying to support their families and themselves, through hard work and dignity.

References

1. U.S. Department of State, Trafficking in Persons Report. June (2013).
2. Permanent Commission on the status of Women. (2014).
3. Winning Dignity and Respect: A Guide to the Domestic Workers bill of rights. (2013).
4. Trafficking in Person Committee notes (11/19/2013).
5. The National Employment Law Project and the National Domestic Workers Alliance (2013).